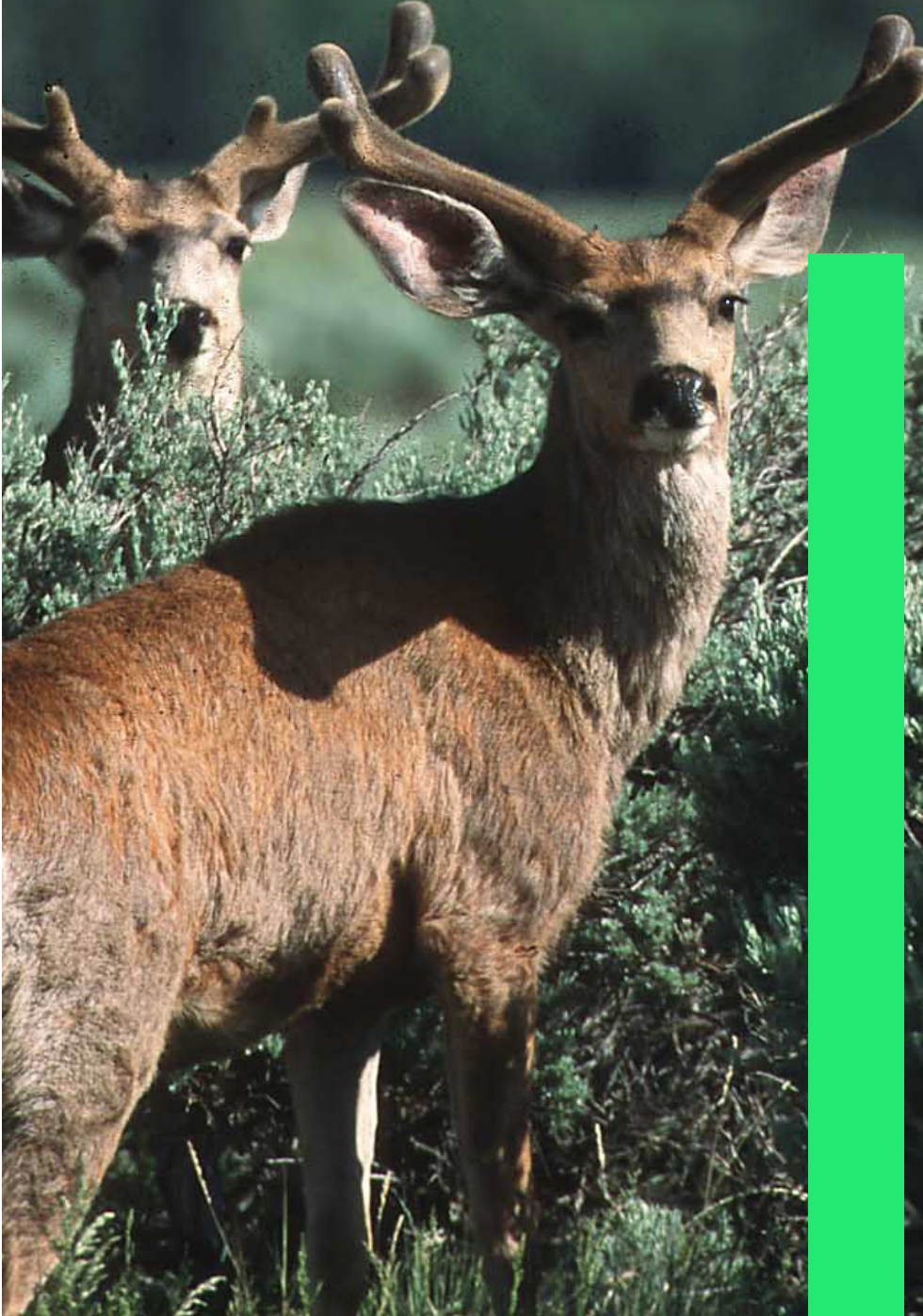


Lovin' Your Ranchette



NEW MEXICO

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE



## Preserving Wildlife Habitat

Your property already may include high-quality habitat such as native grasses, shrubs, trees, wetlands, or stream corridors. To preserve them:

- Minimize mowing. Ground cover in the form of native grasses provides habitat for many birds and mammals.
- When locating a house, road, or other improvements, avoid higher-quality habitats.
- Control noxious weeds that can destroy habitat value.
- Avoid overgrazing by livestock. Consider fencing livestock out of sensitive areas like streambanks and riparian habitats.

## Fencing For Wildlife

The fencing you choose can make a big difference to wildlife, and fencing that accommodates both livestock and wildlife does not have to cost more. Spacing fence wires at 16, 22, 28, and 40 inches from the ground will allow antelope, deer, and elk to get through with reduced fence damage. Leaving that 12-inch gap between the highest wires also will help keep animals from getting tangled in the wires.

## Your Pets and Wildlife

Uncontrolled pets are one of the biggest threats to wildlife. Domestic cats kill many thousands of small mammals and birds every year. Dogs on the loose can harass and kill wildlife and livestock. Free-roaming pets also are easy sources of food for predators. Pets should be under control at all times-leashed, kenneled, or kept indoors.



## Avoiding Conflicts with Wildlife

Some tips for avoiding unpleasant interactions with your wild neighbors:

- Don't feed deer, elk, or other wildlife. Putting out food for deer and elk also will lure predators that may prey on the wildlife - and livestock and pets. It also can cause nutritional problems and even disease in wildlife. Instead, concentrate on planting natural foods for wild creatures.
- Store garbage in plastic and metal containers with tight-fitting lids. Keep the containers in a closed shed or garage and put them out only on trash collection days. Clean trash cans periodically with hot water and chlorine bleach to control odors.
- Feed pets indoors and store pet food inside.

If you live in bear country, take special precautions:

- Use specially designed bear-proof trash containers.
- Clean grease from your barbecue grill and store the grease inside.
- Hang bird seed, suet, and hummingbird feeders on a wire between trees or on your porch or deck - and bring them in at night.
- Do not put fruit, melon rinds, and other tasty items in mulch or compost piles.

## How Well Do You Get Along with Your “Neighbors”

1. Does your land offer a wide range of native vegetation that wildlife can use for food and cover?
2. Is water from a pond, stream, or wetland available to wildlife?
3. Do you keep pets under control at all times?
4. Do you keep trash, pet food, etc., in “wildlife-proof” containers?
5. Can wildlife get through your fences?

The more “yes” responses you have, the more “wildlife-friendly” your property is.



## Improving Your Property

If your property needs improvement do not be discouraged. Your small acreage home place can become a miniature wildlife refuge, attracting many different kinds of wild animals including songbirds, rabbits, bats, butterflies, raccoons, owls, and deer. To become this haven you need to determine what wildlife live in your area, and what species you want to attract. The key to your success in attracting these species depends on your ability to provide for the basic needs of these animals; that is, food, water, and cover.

### Cover

Cover means more than shelter. It is a place where an animal can escape from enemies, find refuge from the weather, and feel secure while it rests. It also means a safe place for raising young.

Different animals need different types of cover. Deer like to rest in secure shrubby areas. Rabbits and some birds make nests in tall grass. Dense shrubs and rock and brush piles serve as refuge for a variety of wildlife when they need a quick get-away.

For your wildlife, a variety of trees, bushes, brush piles, and rock piles will give you the best results. Evergreens offer shelter for birds from the weather year around.

Birds and mammals, like owls and wrens, that usually nest in cavities of mature trees may nest in boxes if available. Specially designed bat boxes erected on buildings and trees may attract these mammals that consume many insects that are forest and crop pests. You can check on-line for good books that explain how to build and maintain these backyard homes.

### Water

In the deserts of New Mexico, we know fresh water is critical to wildlife. Clean, fresh water is as important to birds, bats, and other wildlife as it is for people. Water in a saucer, bird bath, or backyard pond gives wildlife the water they need. Remember to change the water every few days to keep it fresh. In hot weather, it may be necessary to refill the container every day.

Logs, rocks, and other in-water structures provide drinking and basking habitat for butterflies and songbirds. Stones with depressions that collect water will help attract butterflies.

Just by providing water, you will be amazed by the number of wildlife you attract.

## Food

The best way to provide wildlife in New Mexico with the food they need is by planting a wide range of native vegetation. A flower garden will yield food for butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. Grasses that are not mowed will provide seeds for many species of small mammals and birds. Many wildlife species rely on evergreen and deciduous berry-producing shrubs. If you plant a combination of plants that provide nuts, seeds, fruits, berries, and flowers, you will meet the needs of a wide variety of wildlife. Unless you already have mature shrubs and trees, it will take time for you to develop a place that produces this variety. While you are waiting for your property to start producing, you can achieve results by planting annual grasses and flowers. The following lists includes only a few of the flowers, shrubs, and trees you can plant to attract wildlife.

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Flowers - | aster, coneflower, sunflower, honeysuckle, strawberry, trumpet creeper, Virginia creeper, butterfly bush, phlox, zinnia, cosmos, salvia, impatiens, marigold, gladiolus, hollyhock, sage, penstemon |
| Shrubs -  | butterfly bush, sumac, chokecherry, hackberry, sand cherry, screw bean mesquite, 4-winged saltbush  |
| Trees -   | willow, Gambel's oak, bigtooth maple, New Mexico olive, desert willow, pinon  |
| Other -   | dill, clover and other legumes  |







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